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# THE SPEECH

OF THE

RIGHT HONORABLE

## SIR HERCULES LANGRISHE,

ON THE

# BILL

" TO IMPROVE AND AMEND THE STATE
" OF THE REPRESENTATION OF THE
" PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT,"

PRESENTED IN THE

## *HOUSE OF COMMONS,*

FRIDAY, JULY 19, 1793,

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☞ THE Publiſher has introduced into this Speech ſome few Obſervations on the Subject of Reform, ſtated by the Member on a preceding Day; which are ſo cloſely connected with the preſent Matter, and ſo frequently referred to, that it was thought neceſſary to inſert them, in order that the Whole ſhould be underſtood.

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## SIR HERCULES LANGRISHE.

Mr. SPEAKER,

FOUR months have already paſſed, ſince leave was given to bring in a Bill " to improve the Repreſentation of the People in Parliament.—The ſubject has therefore, in my opinion, already too long engaged the agitation of the people, without having been ſubmitted to the diſcuſſion of Parliament. It now comes forward at a period of the ſeſſion ſo far advanced, as muſt preclude all poſſibility of its preſent ſucceſs. However I do not wiſh to have it laid by, as it were, to *ripen by fermentation.* I cannot prevail on myſelf to let it go in reference to the people, with the authority of ſo reſpectable members as thoſe who patronize it, altogether unqueſtioned and uncon-

uncontroverted—at leaſt without ſtating ſome of thoſe arguments which have impreſſed upon my mind a conviction of the inexpedience, and danger of the meaſure.

When I had formerly the honour of addreſſing you on the ſubject of Parliamentary Reform, we could only regulate our opinions by the *probable* effects of ſyſtems, that were but ſpeculation; and theories, which had not been tried.—The preſent time is more enlightened, inaſmuch as theſe theories have been reduced to practice, and we may now learn by the experience of others, to judge with more preciſion, and decide with more authority.

The eventful period of the laſt four years has furniſhed ſuch abundant inſtruction on the ſubject of Reform, that in addreſſing you on the preſent occaſion I ſhould find it difficult to confine myſelf within moderate limits, if I had not the happineſs to obſerve that the public mind was already embracing the wholeſome admonition; and if the preſent ſtage of the bill, and period of the ſeſſion, did not render unſeaſonable ſo ample a diſcuſſion. However, Sir, as I riſe to expreſs ſentiments of oppoſition to a meaſure that *profeſſes* to be the *popular wiſh*, I muſt ſay ſomething in vindication of thoſe ſentiments.

It is of very little conſequence to the country what individual may be affected

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in his private intereſt by the operation of this bill.—It is of little conſequence what transfer of power may be made from one man, or ſet of men, to another.—It is of little conſequence what changes you make in the political ſituation of any man; provided you do not change the condition of the general happineſs; provided you do not weaken the reverence for ancient eſtabliſhment, or ſhake the ſtability of a conſtitution, which has had for its formation the ſucceſſive wiſdom of ages, and has proved in its effects ſo competent to civil liberty and progreſſive proſperity. But my objection to the preſent bill, or to your agitating the ſubject of it at this particular time, is that you *juſtify popular demand*, by conceding to its principle, and you *diſappoint* the *popular demand* by the *meaſure of your conceſſion*. When you concur with the people in diſcontents at their preſent condition, and juſtify them by a partial conceſſion, you authorize thoſe diſcontents, but you do not conclude them. On the contrary, you give them perpetual ſucceſſion, and unceaſing demand;—you deface the chart of the old conſtitution; you level the old boundaries between government and the people, which, like thoſe between the ſea and the land, are conſtituted in *inequality*, and *eminence* of ſituation: And when you thus let looſe the ocean of popular demand, reſtleſs and ſucceſſive as the waves that break upon your ſhore, you will not have the voice of Omnipotence,

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that can ſay, " So far ſhalt thou come, and " no farther." It is not at the *time of a ſtorm* at leaſt, that you can venture on ſuch an experiment;—at no ſeaſon could you attempt it without great hazard.

But the prevailing argument, which is to ſilence every tongue, and convince every underſtanding on this ſubject, is, " That " the *Voice of the People* calls for a Parlia- " mentary Reform;"—an argument of much weight indeed, if it were well founded!——But notwithſtanding all I have heard to that purpoſe, I do not believe the fact to be ſo. The people of Ireland are *many;* the agitators, the writers for the public prints, the heroes, and the hiſtorians of newſpapers, are *few;* though they ſpeak, as it were, with many tongues.—The diſcontented are clamorous; the contented are ſilent; the ſongs of induſtry are only heard at home, whilſt the trumpet of diſcord is audible from ſhore to ſhore.

I know there are ſeveral reſpectable perſons, who think favourably of a *Parliamentary Reform.*—Several very reſpectable Members of this Houſe have indulged themſelves in ſomething like enthuſiaſm on the ſubject;—they have woven garlands to decorate the offering, and prepared crowns of laurel for thoſe who ſhould adminiſter the ſacrifice. And yet, when they have diſcloſed the particular object of their

idolatry; when they have ſtated the different plans, with which they have favoured us during the courſe of this ſeſſion, they have diſcovered a ſufficient *diverſity of opinion* indeed. Therefore I can never be perſuaded, that the people of Ireland are unanimous in calling for a meaſure, when ſcarcely any two of them are agreed in their ſenſe of the meaſure itſelf.—*Reform* is a word, to which every reformer annexes his own idea.—It is a picture, that every man draws from his own imagination, and ſometimes colours to his own intereſt. Therefore if you ſay the people are unanimous in calling for a Parliamentary Reform, you deſcribe a whimſical unanimity indeed; an unanimity of diſcordance; ſomething like that ridiculous concert you have heard of, in which every man ſings a different tune; but as they all make a noiſe together, they call it a concert.

The fact is—In times like the preſent, when the moſt miſchievous induſtry has been employed to propagate new notions of government, and new models of conſtitution, mere *popular clamour* is ever ready at the call of thoſe who invite it; and there are many to be found who take up the word *reform*, or any other parole of diſcontent, becauſe they know it means *innovation*, and may be commotion. For there are in all countries, however free

and however happy, many to be found too reſtleſs for peace, and too turbulent for government; men out of the habits of tranquillity; men whom commerce cannot enrich, or freedom ſatisfy. There are to be found in all countries many who have neither property, nor induſtry, nor occupation; who muſt embrace every thing like a change, and aſpire at commotion, becauſe they know victory may be acquiſition, and defeat can take nothing from them. "Nam ſemper in civitate "quibus opes nullæ ſunt, bonis invident, "malos extollent, vetera odere, nova ex- "optant; odio ſuarum rerum mutari om- "nia ſtudent."—Such men are ever ready to raiſe a *popular clamour*, which is too often miſtaken for the *voice of the people;* whilſt ſucceſsful induſtry and conſcious happineſs remain ſilent—looking for ſtability, not innovation; for enjoyment, not experiment.

The only plan of reform that comes home to the wiſhes or underſtanding of the people, is that which comprehends *the whole of the people*—and that you know very well would not be the Britiſh conſtitution, but a pure democracy; it would be the ſovereign power in the hands of thoſe who had no property; the firſt exerciſe of which power would be to take the property from thoſe who had it.—Yet this is the reform which, when any thing has been ſpecifically

cally referred to, the people have demanded. And I have in my hand a printed plan, formed on that very principle, which has been induſtriouſly circulated, and which embraces to all intents and purpoſes the purity and perfection of the French republic.

I know very well the honourable member who has brought forward this bill, and thoſe who co-operate with him, reprobate ſuch notions as ſtrongly as we do.—Yet I muſt ſay, if you looſen the habits of men from accuſtomed government and experienced happineſs, you will not be able to recal them to tranquillity by your *temperate plans of reform*;—plans that cannot reach the majority of the people: and do you imagine this great majority of the people (which are and muſt be left out of your plans) whilſt by your conceſſions you are flattering their exertions, will be ſatisfied with their own excluſion?—No, Sir! they would grow more confident from their apparent victory, and more extravagant from being diſappointed in their ſhare of the plunder. And this is the misfortune (and it is a great one) of turning the public mind from the contemplation of its happineſs to the vanity of ſpeculation, or the raſhneſs of experiment.

Well regulated ſociety aſcertains to every man his ſphere of action, proportioned to his condition and capacity;—every violation of

of that order is public confuſion. If your taylor were to employ himſelf in mending your form of government, he would not mend your cloaths; if he were to ſpend his time in ſtudying *the rights of man*, he would ſoon want the food of man; like poor Quidnunc the upholſterer, in devouring the papers for intelligence, he would learn the intelligence of his own bankruptcy.——The fact is, Sir, when the people at large take up the trade of politics, they will not follow any other trade—when artizans become conſtitution-makers, they will ſcarcely make any thing elſe; they will not make hats, they will not make ſhoes, they will not make linen cloth.——They may indeed *make a noiſe*, which they may call the *voice of the nation;* they may *make a riot*, which they may call the *energy of the people.* But in the mean time the progreſs of the nation is ſtopped—manufactures will not grow out of idleneſs, proſperity out of politics, or order out of alehouſes; commerce will not draw bills of exchange on debating clubs, and public credit will retire from the terrors of armed aſſociations. You ſee the progreſs and the miſchiefs of what is called *popular diſcuſſion*;—that is, the people talking, inſtead of working; talking of what they do not underſtand, inſtead of applying themſelves to their own buſineſs; debating inſtead of weaving, and making as many parliaments

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in the country as there are porter-houſes. You ſee, Sir, the inevitable conſequences of yielding to the principle of innovation; and tell me if your experience of the ſtate of this country for theſe laſt ſix months confirms or confutes my repreſentations on this ſubject.

It becomes every wiſe ſtate, in regulating its policy, to look to the progreſs of great events in other countries; and we muſt be negligent to a degree of inſenſibility, if we do not look to every circumſtance that led to the calamitous revolution of France. In the firſt *revolutionary reform* of France in the year 1789, the elective franchiſe was confined to *active citizens*, aſcertained by maturity of years, and ſome degree of property. But it ſoon was diſcovered, that of twenty-ſix millions of people there were not three millions of active citizens; and that the *immediate electors* were not in the proportion of one to an hundred of the people. The conſequence was, that the great majority of the people thus excluded, corrupted by the falſe maxim of their new government, "that perſonal repreſentation was neceſſary to freedom;" and tranſported by their ſucceſſes with that frenzy of, I will not ſay liberty, but licentious domination, which has ſince overturned every principle of human virtue and human happineſs, complained, "that they were ſlaves—that they were

"unre-

" unrepreſented—that they were bound by " laws to which they had not agreed, and " that the National Convention did not " ſpeak the national will."—They therefore, by a bold effort; by the interpoſition of clubs, and aſſociations, and armed citizens, completed their reform, an equal repreſentation of *all* the people; and accompliſhed, in my opinion, the perfection of tyranny, the democracy of France.

In Ireland the number of electors does not amount to 100,000;—they are not near ſo many. The preſent bill does not, in my opinion, go to encreaſe the number; nor will you ever propoſe a plan (for I know you will never propoſe a democracy) which would in any very conſiderable degree encreaſe them. But I will ſuppoſe that you were—that they were to be augmented to the number of 200,000; yet ſtill you would find, that of 4,000,000 of people, 3,800,000 would remain deprived of the elective franchiſe; nineteen in twenty of the people.——Now, Sir, if by yielding to the current of innovation you diſengage this great majority of the people from their habits of veneration for the old conſtitution;—if you amuſe them with notions of equal or perſonal repreſentation, which do not belong to our form of government, (and are therefore notions not of reform, but of revolution) is it not natural to ſuppoſe that you will have them like their neighbours,

neighbours, calling out for a new conſtitution; an equal repreſentation of *all* the the people?—You will have them, at once animated and diſappointed by your conceſſion, complaining that *they* are ſlaves—that they are not repreſented—that they are bound by laws to which they have not agreed; with all that cant which belongs to *French equality*, not to *Britiſh liberty*.

You ſee, Sir, if you yield in any degree to the principle of equal repreſentation, you ſet the public mind looſe into the mazes of ſpeculation, and you can never ſatisfy it. You will never conform your practice, to that principle; becauſe you know that principle is not to be found in our conſtitution; but by going as far as your ſpeeches profeſs, and your bill now propoſes, you will give the energy of ſucceſs to the extravagance of enterprize, and inſpire the people with the vain notions, "that tranquillity is ſupineneſs, and that "turbulence will be triumph."——And as to the notion of *ſatisfying moderate men by a temperate reform*, it is the moſt vain and fruitleſs project that ever entered into the mind of man.——If you once ſet looſe amongſt the people the ſpirit of reform, the moderate reformers would ſoon be loſt in the predominancy of popular power.—*Their* ſatisfaction would exactly operate here as it did in France; the moderate men

men would be the firſt victims of their own moderation. You cannot now have recourſe to the living teſtimony of thoſe who could beſt inform you on this ſubject; you cannot now conſult Clermont Tonere, the Duke Briſac, Monſ. Paſcalis, or the others of that numerous band, who were diſtinguiſhed and devoted as the moderate reformers of France.—They are no more! But their monuments (if the barbarity of their countrymen who were their aſſaſſins had not precluded them from theſe laſt honours)—their monuments would have furniſhed records in marble of the vanity and danger of ſuch experiments.

To ſhew you that the ſentiments I utter are not the dreams of a viſionary, or the fictions of an intereſted man, I will read to you ſome manifeſtos on this ſubject, which have been lately circulated through the country.—I will ſhew you how great bodies of reformiſts expreſs their loyalty, and what they expect from their reform.—I will ſhew you loyalty rejoicing at the overthrow of monarchy, and the ſpirit of reform in admiration of the democracy of France.

I do not know the perſons, nor indeed many of the places from which theſe doctrines have proceeded; but as the authors of them have publiſhed them repeatedly, to the end that they may be generally known, and make an impreſſion on the public mind; I only co-

co-operate in their intentions, by extending their notoriety; by ſtating them to you, that they may make a due impreſſion upon your mind.

For that purpoſe I ſhall now beg leave to point out to your obſervation a bright luminary, which has lately made its appearance in the northern hemiſphere.—It is not that newly-diſcovered planet, which from the benignity of its radiance may have been diſtinguiſhed by the title of the Georgium ſides.——It is not that North Star, by which, I truſt, thoſe who guide the helm of the ſtate, will ſhape their political courſe. It is the newſpaper called the Northern Star, printed at Belfaſt, which I am going to read to you as part of my ſpeech.

[Here he read to the Houſe a great variety of extracts and paſſages out of ſeveral of thoſe papers, being the declarations of ſeveral bodies of men on the ſubject of reform, and then proceeded.]

I have laid before you ſome detail of the public ſentiment, as it has been publicly profeſſed on this ſubject;—in no inſtance of which can I diſcriminate between reform and ſubverſion. If the people call, as they do, for perſonal repreſentation, they call for *what* perſonal repreſentation has given to France: And do you not imagine, men will imitate what they admire, and

purſue what they think happineſs?——I have given you the ſentiments of the reformiſts under various conditions of the human mind; under the ſolemnity of religious concord—under the pride and honour of arms—under the ingenuous impreſſions of ſocial ſincerity; and they are all the ſame. They tell you, "they approve a government by King, Lords, "and Commons," whilſt they are engaged at their feſtivals on the overthrow of monarchy.——They call aloud for a Reform of Parliament, whilſt they are extolling the *Rights of Man*, and celebrating the ſucceſſes of the French arms: and in the open-heartedneſs of their conviviality, with aſally of wit proportioned to their talents, but expreſſive of their principles, they toaſt "the cannon law of the people."—They tell you, "they will arm and co-operate "with other armed citizens of Ireland, in "procuring, by *every means in their power*, "an equal repreſentation of *all* the people "in Parliament." They tell you, "they "are firmly reſolved to carry their arms, "and wear their uniforms, until a com-"pleat reform in the repreſentation of "their country in Parliament be obtained; "tythes, and unmerited penſions, totally "aboliſhed; which they hope to ſee ef-"fected *without a revolution!*" They deſcribe to you pretty emphatically the conditions of government, when "reſiſtance is

" public virtue, ſanctioned by the laws of " heaven, and the *rights of man.*—Let pen- " ſioned hirelings, the political quakers " of the day, tremble; they *denounce* all " ſuch; and will not be deterred from " their duty, until they ſhall taſte the " ſweets of freedom, and pluck the fruit " luxuriant from the *tree of liberty.*—They " talk in raptures of the *Republic of France* " —of *Liberty* and *Equality*—a ſpeedy *Con-* " *vention of the People*, and *Diſſolution of the* " *Club of Monopoliſts.*" They tell you expreſsly, " that extending the elective fran- " chiſe to *all* the members of the commu- " nity, is the only method by which the " repeal of laws, oppreſſive and unconſti- " tutional, can be obtained, and the pub- " lic mind quieted." And they all agree, that the ſentiments, which they dictate, ſhall be reſounded through the nation, by the organ of a National Convention.—— Here, Sir, you have great bodies of men ſpeaking their ſentiments to you explicitly. They talk to you of their wiſhes, and their means—their counſels, and their ſwords; are you decided to make a ſtand againſt ſuch principles, and reſiſt ſuch demands? I know you are!—And if you are, you cannot entertain a meaſure, which however well intended, muſt be underſtood to juſtify the *one*, and concede to the *other*.

I omit dwelling on the proceedings of the late Convention of Dungannon. I omit obſerving,

obſerving, as I might do, on the late valedictory admonition of the Catholic Committee; which, "after that thou hadſt "not denied them the requeſt of their lips, "but hadſt granted them their hearts de-"ſire, might have departed in peace;"—might have repreſſed the impulſe of that impatient zeal, which expoſed them to the charge, that before they were well ſeated within the temple of the conſtitution, they were perſuaded to preach diſſenſion to its miniſters, and a ſchiſm in its doctrines. I ſhall only obſerve on theſe tranſactions (what I already ſaid to you upon a former occaſion, and what I can never repeat too often, to do juſtice to the ſincerity of my conviction) "that your conſtitution will "ſpeedily become extinct, and your liber-"ties proſtrate in the duſt, if you ſuffer "conventions, committes, aſſociations, or "clubs, to aſſume authority in your public "affairs."——And the miſchiefs of that revolution, which ſome moderate men "hope may not be neceſſary," have already commenced, if armed citizens dictate to the Parliament of the land.—You ſee, Sir, theſe ſentiments of reform, which I have read to you, are *Mr. Paine's philoſophy;* exhibited in a new edition, with a deluſive frontiſpiece—as it were, with a device of the King's arms ſcrolled on the title page.—They have their liberty and equality, and their rights of man;—they complain

complain that the many are governed by the few;—they aſſume the foppery of French phraſe, as well as French principle, and cultivate the tree of liberty;—they diſcard the ſanctity of ancient eſtabliſhment, and make government (as Mr. Paine expreſſes it) "the work of a day." I hope it will not be the work of *this* day. For my part I ſhall ever prefer the conſecutive wiſdom of ages to the growth of a day.—I prefer the oak, that has taken deep root in your land, that has ſtood the ſhocks of time, the ſucceſſion of ſeaſons, and the changes of the heavens, to the *weeds of the field*, which are the growth of the day, the production of wildneſs, and the promiſe of deſolation. Though I had no other reaſon for it, I would preſerve thoſe chartered rights—thoſe corporate bodies, as ſo many ſtrong-holds in the conſtitution againſt theſe dangerous incurſions;—nothing ſhould perſuade me to *diſmantle* them, at the very time when ſuch pernicious doctrines have taken the field againſt them. It would be a policy, as injurious in its conſequences as that of Joſeph the Second, in the Netherlands, who, by demoliſhing the old fortreſſes of his country, expoſed it to the ravages of a reforming army.

When the reformiſts here in the ſpirit of French principle complain, "that the many are governed by the few."—They complain

complain of almoſt every government that ever exiſted, and of that very government which this bill propoſes to them. I never knew or read of a government, at leaſt from the days of Pericles to thoſe of Pethion (pardon the aſſociation) in which the intereſts and the will of the *many* were not intruſted to the diſcretion of the *few*. If the *multitude* were to govern, it would in the firſt inſtance be the government of ignorance over wiſdom, and of violence over order; in the end, the people themſelves would be enſlaved.——The fact is, the power of the people, like the dominion of female beauty, does not long ſurvive the moment of their being corrupted. They are flattered until they are ſeduced, and when they are ſeduced, the ſeducer becomes the tyrant.—You will find the truth of this poſition not only in the legends of love, but in the hiſtory of every democracy or popular inſurrection that ever exiſted; you may read it in the repreſentations of Roland, of Pethion, of Dumourier themſelves; you may read it in the deſtiny of that country, in which (as an able writer expreſſes it) "ſuſpicion "fills their priſons, and maſſacre is their "gaol-delivery."—And as to the *equality of man*, which has been preached up as a part of the creed of your modern philoſophers and reformers, I ſhall only ſay—*equality of man* is what God, or nature, or civil ſociety,

ſociety, never once ordained, or accompliſhed. Men are not born equal! Capacity and ſtupidity, ſtrength and weakneſs diſtinguiſh them almoſt in their mother's womb.——*Diſparity* is the birth-right of man. And as natural endowments are unequal, ſo are thoſe that are to be acquired—*power* and *property* muſt be unequal. If the advocates for liberty and equality were to divide in equal ſhares amongſt the people the whole property of the nation; that equality of partition would not laſt for one month; the differences that ariſe from wiſdom and folly, ſtrength and weakneſs, induſtry and idleneſs, parſimony and prodigality; theſe diſparities by their immediate operation, would overturn this equality, with all its conſequences.—— You would ſoon ſee œconomy accumulating from the waſte of profuſion, and talents and genius gathering property and power from the imbecility of ignorance;—you would obſerve that ſome had laviſhed, and ſome had hoarded—and that whatever one man had *found*, another had *loſt*; or if they were to draw wealth from a foreign ſource, they muſt draw it in different meaſures, according to their different faculties. For the magnitude of the burden muſt be proportioned to the ſtrength of the ſhoulders that are to bear it, or the activity of the ſpirit that is to purſue it.

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There is only one relation, in which the *equality of man* is an idea juſt, or rational, or practicable: and that we enjoy in a more eminent degree, than any country in the known world—I mean equal protection, equal taxation, and equal controul of the laws over every man in the community. You need not contend for *that equality;* becauſe, whatever may be the lot of other nations, you know you enjoy it already.

When we reflect on the tendency of theſe maxims—when we examine the doctrine and analize the philoſophy of theſe fathers of reform, Voltaire, Rouſſeau, Delambert, Mirabeau, Paine; theſe levellers of every venerable ſtructure of ſettled happineſs, we feel ourſelves comparatively reconciled to the objects of our former averſion.—The morality of Hobbs, the politics of Machieval, the enthuſiaſm of Vane—even the daring the hypocriſy of Cromwell impreſs upon our minds a diminiſhed abhorrence.——How mild, how moderate, how compatible with human happineſs do they appear, oppoſed to thoſe pernicious theories; which, in contempt of the ſanctity of covenant, and obligation of law, tell you, "that civil ſociety begins where "artificial government ends?"

I know very well that all free government is derived from the people, with a reference to their will and an attention to their happineſs. Government is inſtituted

for

for the good of the people, as the ſun is for the light of the world.—But the guidance of neither is to be committed to every preſumptuous candidate for the reins (and there are many ſuch in every village) who, if they were to "obtain the chariot for "one day, would ſet the world on fire."

All theſe notions that have diſturbed the repoſe of the world, are dreams.—But they are bad dreams; that leave a dangerous and diſtempered impreſſion on the mind, which has in ſome countries broken out into paroxiſms of popular frenzy.

It is to protect us againſt this popular frenzy, that I beſeech you not to feed the minds of the people with diſcontents at old forms—at old conſtitution. *Inſtituta majorum tueri ſapientis eſt.* If at this time you detach the public mind from this ſacred devotion;—if you ſet up reform, which is experiment; againſt ancient eſtabliſhment, which has been happineſs; there is not a vice of the age—there is not a frenzy of the day, that will not flock to the ſtandard of reform. And ſo ſtrongly is this ſentiment impreſſed upon our ſiſter country, that I myſelf have heard ſome of the greateſt and beſt men in England—however ſpeculatively friends to the notion of reform—however divided in party or in politics, unite in one voice to declare, "that this is not the time to agitate the "queſtion of reform."

As to the ſubſtance of the bill before you, I ſtate my objections with ſome diffidence from the reſpect I bear to the gentlemen who have introduced it. But I muſt object to the bill as a *transfer of power*, rather than a *reform of Parliament*. I object to the bill, as a juſtification of the popular demand, without going one ſtep to ſatisfy it. It has been the faſhion of this ſeſſion to declare, "that the public mind is greatly agitated."—A faſhion, in my opinion, "more to be honoured in the breach than the obſervance;" and which, like every other faſhion, has become ridiculous by being carried to the extreme.—I have always thought ſuch declarations rather *productive* than *deſcriptive*; much more likely to produce the evil they deprecate, than to deſcribe what is already in exiſtence. But if the public mind be *ardent in its wiſhes* on that ſubject, the preſent bill would not gratify one of them. Whenever the people have expreſſed their wiſhes on this ſubject, they were for an *equal*, or at leaſt a *more equal* repreſentation of the people in Parliament.——Now this bill, which is to ſatisfy the people—which is to ſettle the violent agitation of the public mind, does not go to that object at all;—the Catholic bill certainly did in a great degree; this bill does not in any degree.

In the firſt place it adds one member to each county. How would that operate? I omit

I omit dwelling on the obviouſly ariſtocratic tendency of that proviſion, as favouring the combination of the moſt powerful intereſts of each county to ſuppreſs competition.—But does it tend to the more equal repreſentation of the people in Parliament? Quite the contrary!—It encreaſes the number of *the elected*, without encreaſing the number of *the electors;* which ſo far makes the repreſentation more unequal than it was before.——By the next proviſion, all freeholders of ten pounds a year, within a diſtrict of twenty-four miles circumference, are to be voters for boroughs. Now theſe 10*l.* electors for boroughs were before entitled to vote for county members. So you either transfer their franchiſe from the county to the borough, or allow the ſame perſon to vote for four members inſtead of two.—In either caſe you do not add one man to the conſtituent body—not one!

The next proviſion obliges the future freemen (which in future muſt be all the freemen) to be men *reſident* within the diſtrict, having a qualification of 5*l.* per annum freehold. This muſt in a conſiderable degree diminiſh the conſtituent body; becauſe you aboliſh thoſe freemen who are not qualified, or not reſident, and in return you confer the right of voting on thoſe who, from their qualifications, muſt be intitled to vote in the county at large.

Thus

Thus you ſtill narrow the baſis of repreſentation, and make it more unequal than it was before.

There is one proviſion alone that affects to counteract this diminution of the conſtituent body—that which gives the right of voting to perſons exerciſing certain trades, and having been a certain time reſident; yet when it is examined, how inadequate to the end does it appear?—— In great and populous towns, they generally have that right already by charter; in potwalloping boroughs, they have it from reſidence; in ſmall and decayed boroughs, the numbers admitted under this title muſt be too inconſiderable to be worthy of calculation in this great account.— So that on the whole, the effect of this bill would, in my opinion, be, to decreaſe the number of the electors—to encreaſe the number of the elected--to render the repreſentation of the people in Parliament more *unequal*—to give energy to innovation, and to diſappoint the wiſhes which yourſelves have inſpired.—When the people call for an *equal* repreſentation in Parliament, can you ſuppoſe they will be ſatisfied with a law tending to make it more *unequal?*——No, Sir! the people who are clamorous for Parliamentary Reform would no more be ſatisfied with this bill than they would be, if they had aſked for *bread*, and you were to give them a *ſtone*.

The bill therefore would not, in my opinion, anſwer any public good.——It would be a transfer of power from one great man to another; from the oppidan to the lord of the manor; but it would be nothing more. And if it were not perhaps below the gravity of Parliament, it would be matter of ſome curioſity to ſtate the preciſe boroughs, which, with their rights, members and appurtenances, would by this act be conveyed from one individual to another, as ſpecifically as lands and tenements are uſually conveyed by any ordinary deed of conveyance. It would be an aſſignment to perſons who from their local circumſtances and ſituation, are as aſcertainable as if they were ſpecifically named; and, if I have not forgot all my law-learning, Coke-Littleton ſtates where "aſſignees "may take advantage of a covenant real, "without being named in the deed."—— I am ſure many would do ſo under this deed. There is, it is true, one difference between this and the ordinary forms of conveyance, which is, that in this caſe no valuable conſideration is given or expreſſed.—Perhaps the reaſon is, that to this deed in fact there are not *different parties;* for we are ourſelves both grantors and grantees; and when the givers and receivers are the ſame perſons, the *act of accepting* may be deemed a ſufficient *conſideration* for the grant. I muſt likewiſe admit

admit that there are many amongſt us who willl not object to this bill *as differing in ſubſtance from its title*, which purports, "to improve and amend the ſtate of the "repreſentation of the people in Parlia-"ment;" becauſe it is very natural for every one of us to think, that the ſtate of the repreſentation would be conſiderably improved, if it were to be compoſed principally of *our own friends*.—But I object to the bill as conveying neither benefit nor ſatisfaction to the people. And when I conſider the great abilities of the gentlemen who prepared it, I am the more convinced of the inſuperable difficulties of new-modelling a conſtitution that has been formed by the wiſdom of ages, and approved by the experience of ineſtimable benefits.

It is the duty of Parliament not to flatter the temporary deluſions, but to conſult the permanent intereſts of the people.—It is the duty of the people to judge of Parliament not by an abſtract or ſpeculative review of its *conſtituent parts*, but by its *general effects*.—If it has been found competent to civil liberty and public happineſs, it has anſwered all the ends of good government.——But ſuperficial ſagacity plumes itſelf on the diſcovery, that time has altered the condition of ſeveral places—that ſome boroughs are become decayed, and others deſerted—that one is but a barn;

another

another a ſteeple; another a tree.—What then? If the tree bring forth good fruit, it ought not to be hewn down, and caſt into the fire.—If the general combination be public benefit, it ought not to be al tered; for there could be no greater evil, than the inſtability of a conſtitution perpetually vibrating with every accidental change in any of its conſtituent parts.—If the people drink the waters of happineſs, they ſhould prize the fountain from which they flow.——And I beg to be informed what provocation or rational purpoſe ſhould induce a wiſh in the people to aboliſh this parliament, or alter the principles of its inſtitution? Is it to get another parliament to undo what we have done this ſeſſion? or what we have been doing for theſe laſt twelve years?—Is it to repeal the laws of this ſeſſion, that have united the people of all perſuaſions in one common intereſt? Is it to repeal the law of this ſeſſion, that has confided the defence of the nation to the property of the nation? Is it to repeal the law, that has conceded the royal prerogative to the freedom of Parliament; or that, which has made an offering of the hereditary revenue of the King to the relief of the people? Is it to appeal to a ſpirit different from that which has animated the preſent Parliament, and diſtinguiſhed this ſeſſion above all others by acts of real and ſubſtantial reform?—A reform that is not

inno-

innovation, but aſſimilation—aſſimilation of our government to that of Great Britain—a reform that does not affect to new-model the venerable fabric of our conſtitution, but to form a barrier around it, to protect it againſt the approaches of future abuſe;—to make it permanent, as it makes it pure; by reſtraining prodigality, and placing bounds to the power of the crown? —Or is it to renounce the acquiſitions of 1782, your free trade—your free conſtitution—your Habeas Corpus—your repeal of Poignings, or your Judge's bill? Or is it to repeal that code of laws, which have in a few years ſpread agriculture and manufactures, and commerce through the land? No! Sir, it is all a reſtleſs ſpirit and popular deluſion.—It is that deluſion which would ſacrifice benefits that are ſubſtantial, to ſpeculations that are viſionary.—It is a deluſion, like that which tranſported the merchant Abudah, (in the Tales of the Genii) to abandon his palaces of ſilver and his temples of gold; the comforts of his affluence, and the raptures of his ſeraglio; to ſet out on a pilgrimage in ſearch of the *Taliſman of Oraſmenes;* becauſe he was told that the voice of the people from the banks of the Tigris to the Euphrates reſounded the praiſes of the Taliſman of Oraſmenes; although of the admiring multitude not one of them had ever beheld it—although they differed in their opinions concerning its properties and its powers—although they

they knew not whether it was made of the gold of Ormus, or the cedar of Lebanon, or a branch of the Feitch-tree that grows on the burning ſands, out of which the natives carve their own gods.—But ſome reſtleſs genii had whiſpered in their ears, "that the Taliſman of Oraſmenes would "make every one of the people as power-"ful as the Sultan himſelf."

I ſhall leave the merchant Abudah, after his fruitleſs ſearch, to conſole himſelf in his diſappointment, by reſuming that induſtry which had produced his former wealth; and embracing thoſe laws, by whoſe benignity it had been protected.—And if I might preſume to addreſs, in the voice of authority, my countryman, engaged as he is in as vain a purſuit, I would ſay to him, in the ſacred words, "Go thou "and do likewiſe."

A

# BILL

FOR

AMENDING AND IMPROVING THE STATE OF THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT.

WHEREAS the ſtate of the repreſentation of the people in Parliament is greatly defective, and it would tend much to protect the liberty of the ſubject, and to preſerve our excellent conſtitution, if the people of this realm were more fairly and equally repreſented in Parliament.

Be it enacted, by the King's Moſt Excellent Majeſty, by and with the advice and conſent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons in this preſent Parliament aſſembled, and by the authority of the ſame, that from and after the expiration or diſſolution of this preſent Parliament the number of knights to be elected and returned to repreſent each county within this kingdom in any future Parliament to be hereafter holden and kept within this realm ſhall be three inſtead of two knights as heretofore uſed and accuſtomed, and for that end and purpoſe the freeholders in each and every county within this kingdom

dom (who have by law a right to vote for members to ſerve in Parliament, and none others) are hereby authorized, empowered and required, at every general election to be hereafter holden for members to ſerve in Parliament, to chuſe and elect three perſons to ſerve as knights or repreſentatives in Parliament for ſaid county, which ſaid three perſons ſo elected ſhall be duly returned as knights or members to ſerve in Parliament for ſaid county; and the ſaid knights or members ſo elected and returned ſhall from thenceforth have, poſſeſs and enjoy all the rights, powers, authorities and privileges which are poſſeſſed and enjoyed by the knights who now ſit in Parliament within this realm.

And be it enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that from and after the expiration or diſſolution of this preſent Parliament the number of citizens to be elected and returned to repreſent the city of Dublin in Parliament ſhall be three, and that the number of citizens to be elected and returned to repreſent the city of Cork in Parliament ſhall be three; and for that end and purpoſe the freemen and freeholders of the ſaid city of Dublin who are by law entitled to vote for members to ſerve in Parliament, and none other, are hereby authorized, empowered and required, at every general election to be hereafter holden for members to ſerve in Parliament for the ſaid city from and after the period aforeſaid, to chuſe and elect three perſons to ſerve as citizens or repreſentatives in Parliament for ſaid city of Dublin; and the freemen and freeholders of the ſaid city of Cork are hereby authorized and required, at every general election to be hereafter holden for members to ſerve in Parliament for the ſaid city, to chuſe and elect three perſons to be citizens or repre-

repreſentatives in Parliament for ſaid city of Cork; and the ſaid three perſons ſo choſen and elected as members for the ſaid city of Dublin ſhall be duly returned as members to ſerve in Parliament for ſaid city, and ſaid perſons ſo choſen and elected for the ſaid city of Cork ſhall be duly returned as members to ſerve in Parliament for ſaid city; and all the ſaid ſeveral citizens ſo elected and returned to ſerve in Parliament ſhall from thenceforth have, poſſeſs and enjoy all the rights, powers, authorities and privileges which are now poſſeſſed and enjoyed by any citizen or citizens already elected and returned to ſit in Parliament.

Provided always, that nothing herein contained ſhall be deemed or taken to give to any city or town within this kingdom, which now is or hereafter ſhall be made a county of a city or a county of a town, a right or power by virtue of its ſo being a county of a city or a county of a town, to chooſe and elect more than two members to ſerve in Parliament for ſuch city or town, it being the true intent and meaning of this act to give and grant the ſaid power of electing and returning three members to ſerve in Parliament to each of the thirty-two counties into which this kingdom is now divided, and to the cities of Dublin and Cork, and to no other counties, cities, or towns whatſoever.

And be it hereby further enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that when in any future Parliament to be hereafter holden and kept within this realm any vacancy or vacancies ſhall happen to ariſe during the continuance of the ſaid Parliament by the death or expulſion of all or any of the ſaid perſons ſo returned to ſerve in Parliament for any of the ſaid counties, or for either of the ſaid cities

of

of Dublin or Cork; or in caſe all or any of the ſaid three perſons ſo returned ſhall be afterwards declared and adjudged not duly elected purſuant to the laws now in force in this kingdom for the trial of petitions or controverted elections, or in caſe that from any other cauſe whatſoever the ſeat or ſeats in Parliament of all or any of the ſaid three perſons ſo elected and returned ſhall become vacant, in every ſuch caſe a new writ or new writs ſhall iſſue to the returning officer of the ſaid county or counties, and of the ſaid city or cities reſpectively, for the purpoſe of electing and returning one or more perſon or perſons (as the caſe may require) in the room or ſtead of him or them whoſe ſeat or ſeats have ſo become vacant, in the ſame manner as writs now iſſue to ſupply the vacancy of any ſeat or ſeats in Parliament, and thereupon the freeholders of ſaid county or counties, and the freemen and freeholders of ſaid city or cities, who by law are authorized to vote for members to ſerve in Parliament ſhall reſpectively proceed to chooſe and elect one or more perſon or perſons (as the writ ſhall direct) to repreſent the ſaid county or city in Parliament, in the ſtead and room of ſuch perſon or perſons whoſe ſeats have become vacant as aforeſaid; and ſaid perſon and perſons ſo choſen and elected ſhall be duly returned as a member or members to ſerve in Parliament for the ſaid county or city, and ſo on from time to time as often as any vacancy ſhall happen to ariſe during the continuance of the ſaid Parliament.

And whereas enlarging the diſtricts of the ſeveral cities and borough towns within this kingdom would tend to render their elections of citizens and burgeſſes to ſerve in parliament much more free and independent,

Be

Be it enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that from and after the expiration or diſſolution of this preſent Parliament, the limits or precincts of every city, borough, town or manor having a right to ſend members to Parliament, ſhall for the purpoſes of this act only extend and be deemed and taken to extend to a ſpace or diſtance of four miles from the ſaid city, borough, town or manor, which ſpace or diſtance is to be meaſured by a line to be drawn from ſome one place within the ſaid city, borough, town or manor as near the centre of the preſent ſcite of the ſaid city, borough, town or manor as conveniently may be done, and to extend in every direction to a diſtance of four miles from the ſaid place and no further, ſo as thereby to make the circuit of the diſtrict round the ſaid city, borough, town or manor equal to twenty-four miles in circumference or thereabouts, and which ſpace contained within the ſaid circuit ſhall be for the purpoſes of this act deemed and taken as the diſtrict of the ſaid city, borough, town or manor.

Provided always, that where any city, borough, town or manor, having a right to ſend members to ſerve in Parliament, ſhall be ſo ſituate as that a line of four miles cannot conveniently be drawn or meaſured in the manner herein before directed, by reaſon of the vicinity of ſome other city, borough, town or manor having alſo a right to ſend members to ſerve in Parliament, or by reaſon of the proximity of the ſea, then and in every ſuch caſe a certain diſtrict ſhall be meaſured from the moſt central place within the ſaid city, borough, town or manor in ſuch direction as can be beſt and moſt conveniently done, and which ſhall be equal or as nearly as may be to a ſpace contained within a circumference of twenty-four

four miles, and which ſpace ſhall be marked out and allotted as and for the diſtrict of the ſaid city, borough, town or manor ſituate as aforeſaid, ſo as in all caſes to give to every city, borough, town or manor having a right to ſend members to Parliament a diſtrict thereunto appertaining equal to twenty-four miles in circumference.

And for the better aſcertaining the limits and boundaries of the ſeveral diſtricts aforeſaid, and in order to prevent all controverſy relative thereto,

Be it enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that from and after the paſſing of this act the Speaker of the Houſe of Commons ſhall iſſue his order or warrant to the ſheriffs of the ſeveral counties in this kingdom, commanding the ſaid ſheriffs to trace and mark out the boundaries of the ſeveral diſtricts which are to be allotted to each city, borough, town or manor lying within the ſaid county, purſuant to the true intent and meaning of this act; and the ſaid ſheriffs ſhall within three months after the receipt of the ſaid order or warrant fix and aſcertain the boundaries of the diſtrict appertaining unto every ſuch city, borough, town or manor lying within the ſaid county, according to the directions in this act contained; and the ſaid ſheriff, for the ſaid purpoſe, ſhall ſummon and impanel a jury of twelve freeholders of ten pounds freehold lying within the ſaid county, but not in the barony in which the ſaid city, borough, town or manor lies, which ſaid jury ſhall perambulate the ſaid boundaries together with the ſaid ſheriff, and allot the ſaid ſeveral diſtricts by metes and bounds, for which end and purpoſe ſaid ſheriffs ſhall employ one or more ſkilful ſurveyors to attend upon the ſaid jury and mark out the ſeveral diſtricts as aforeſaid; and after the ſaid jury ſhall

ſhall have allotted and marked out the ſaid diſtrict by plain and diſtinct metes and bounds in the manner directed by this act, the ſaid ſheriff ſhall make a return of the allotment of the ſaid ſeveral diſtricts, ſpecifying therein the exact metes and bounds as aſcertained by the ſaid jury, and lodge the ſame with the clerk of the crown and hanaper on or before the twenty-fifth day of December next.

And to the end that a full jury of freeholders may be had for the purpoſe aforeſaid, the ſheriff of the county ſhall iſſue his ſummons to twenty-four freeholders of ten pounds freehold at the leaſt within the ſaid county (out of which twelve ſhall be ſtruck by the ſaid ſheriff) commanding them to attend him at the time and place therein mentioned (giving fourteen days notice thereof) for the purpoſe of alloting the diſtrict as aforeſaid, and therein ſpecifying the name of the city, borough, town or manor whoſe diſtrict is to be allotted.

Provided always, that each jury ſo impanelled ſhall aſcertain and allot the diſtrict of one ſuch city, borough, town or manor, and no more; and if any of the freeholders ſhall neglect to attend on the ſaid ſummons without reaſonable cauſe of excuſe, to be allowed by the ſaid ſheriff, the ſaid ſheriff is hereby authorized to impoſe on the ſaid perſon ſo abſenting himſelf a fine of twenty pounds, which ſaid fine ſhall be returned and certified into his Majeſty's court of Exchequer, and thereupon ſuch proceſs ſhall iſſue for the levying thereof as is uſual in caſes of fines due to his Majeſty.

And be it further enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that each of the ſaid twelve freeholders

ſo impanelled as a jury ſhall take the oath following, which the ſaid ſheriff is hereby empowered to adminiſter:

" I, A. B. do ſolemnly ſwear that I will to " the beſt of my ſkill and judgment, without " favour or partiality to any perſon whatſoever, " mark out and allot the diſtrict for the city or " town of (here naming the city, town or " manor) purſuant to the act in that caſe made " and provided."

And to the end that a proper fund may be provided for the expences attending the marking out the diſtricts aforeſaid,

Be it hereby enacted, that the ſheriff ſhall return to the grand jury of the ſaid county an exact eſtimate of the expences attending the marking out and allotting the ſaid diſtrict, allowing to every juror attending thereupon a ſum of one pound per day, and to the ſurveyor or ſurveyors ſuch ſum as the ſaid ſheriff ſhall think fit, not exceeding the ſum of for which ſaid ſums the grand jury of the ſaid county is authorized and required to make a preſentment, to be levied in the ſame manner as all other preſentments of grand juries are raiſed and levied.

Be it further enacted, that when the diſtrict of the ſaid city, town, borough or manor ſhall be ſo allotted and marked out as aforeſaid, every freeholder who ſhall be ſeized of a freehold of ten pounds value within the ſaid diſtrict ſhall have a right to vote for members to ſerve in Parliament for the ſaid city, borough, town or manor, any former law or uſage to the contrary notwithſtanding; provided always that the ſaid perſon ſo claiming

claiming a right to vote at ſaid election ſhall have been ſeized of his freehold one whole year before the teſt of the writ which iſſued for holding the ſaid election, and ſhall have regiſtered his freehold ſix months before the teſt of the ſaid writ, purſuant to the act made in the year of his preſent Majeſty for the due regiſtering of freeholds.

And to the end that no partial allotments of ſaid diſtricts may be made,

Be it further enacted, that in caſe any three or more freeholders of ten pounds freehold lying within the ſaid diſtrict ſhall conceive themſelves aggrieved by the allotment of the ſaid diſtrict in manner aforeſaid, it ſhall be lawful for the ſaid freeholders to preſent a petition to the Houſe of Commons, complaining of the ſaid allotment, thereby ſetting forth the grounds of the ſaid complaint, and the merits of the ſaid petition ſhall be referred to the determination of a committee of fifteen members of the Houſe of Commons, to be choſen by ballot, and ſtruck in the ſame manner and ſubject to the ſame rules as committees are now choſen for the trial of petition upon controverted elections; and the ſaid committee ſo choſen ſhall have full power and authority to ſummon all perſons before them, and to examine witneſſes upon oath as to the matters thereby referred unto them; and the members of the ſaid committee, as ſoon as they ſhall have been choſen as aforeſaid, ſhall at the table of the Houſe of Commons take the oath following:

" I, A. B. do ſolemnly ſwear that I will fairly " and impartially try the merits of the petition " now to me referred according to the beſt of my " ſkill and judgment. So help me God."

And

And be it further enacted, that the ſaid committee ſhall forthwith proceed to examine into the merits of ſaid petition, and ſhall either annul or confirm the ſaid allotment of the ſaid diſtrict as to them ſhall ſeem juſt, which judgment of the ſaid committee ſhall be final and concluſive.

Provided always, that the ſaid committee ſhall have all the powers and authorities as to the trial of the ſaid petition, and their proceedings ſhall in all caſes be governed by the ſame rules and regulations as are preſcribed by the laws now in force for the trial of petitions upon controverted elections.

And in caſe the ſaid committee ſhall annul and make void the ſaid allotment of the diſtrict aforeſaid, then a new allotment ſhall be made of ſaid diſtrict in the manner herein before preſcribed, for which purpoſe the Speaker of the Houſe of Commons ſhall iſſue his order or warrant as aforeſaid to the ſheriff of ſaid county, who ſhall proceed to make a new allotment of the diſtrict as before preſcribed.

Be it further enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that from and after the day of no perſon who ſhall be elected and admitted to the freedom of any corporation in any city or town corporate ſhall by virtue of ſuch election and admiſſion have a right to vote for members to ſerve in Parliament for the ſaid city or town corporate, unleſs the ſaid perſon ſhall have been ſeized of a freehold tenement of the value of five pounds by the year within the ſaid city or town corporate upon which he or his family ſhall have reſided for one whole year before the time of ſuch election and admiſſion.

Provided

Provided always that nothing herein contained ſhall extend to any perſon or perſons who is or are admitted or who have a right to their freedom by reaſon of birth, marriage, or ſervice to any trade or calling, but that all ſuch rights ſhall remain in full force as if this act had not been made.

Be it further enacted, that every freeman or freeholder voting for a member to ſerve in Parliament for the ſaid city, borough, town or manor, ſhall (if required by any other perſon having a right to vote at ſaid election) take the oath following:

Be it further enacted, by the authority aforeſaid, that each and all the inhabitant or inhabitants of every city, borough or town corporate, having a right to ſend members to ſerve in Parliament, who reſide within the precincts or diſtrict of the ſaid city, borough or town corporate, as preſcribed by this act, and who ſhall have exerciſed any of the following trades or callings for five years within the diſtricts aforeſaid, ſhall from and after the day of have a right to vote and be admitted to vote at the election of any repreſentative or repreſentatives to be choſen to repreſent ſaid cities, boroughs or towns corporate, in Parliament.

And be it further enacted, that every perſon who ſhall be returned as a member to ſerve in Parliament from and after the day of ſhall before he be admitted to his ſeat in Parliament take the oath following:

"I do

" I do ſolemnly ſwear that I have not directly " or indirectly procured my election and return " to Parliament by the means of any ſum or ſums " of money whatſoever, or by any promiſe of " any pecuniary reward whatſoever, and that I " have not authorized any perſon whatſoever to " give or promiſe any ſum of money whatſoever " for procuring me to be elected and returned " a member to ſerve in Parliament, and that if " any ſuch promiſe hath been made on my be- " half I will not ratify or make good the ſame. " So help me God."

Provided always, that nothing in this act contained ſhall extend or in any wiſe be deemed or taken to extend to the cities of Waterford, Kilkenny, Limerick, Londonderry

and the towns of

but that all their rights, franchiſes and privileges, limits and precincts, ſhall remain and continue as if this act had not been made.

FINIS.